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SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAN, INL, WHA/MEX (EMRICH)

WHITE HOUSE FOR HOMELAND SECURITY COUNCIL

DHS OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (Marmaud)

CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION (Bonner)

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ELTN](#) [ASEC](#) [PBTS](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: Canadian Border Patrol idea gains support from Senate and Mayor's Association

Ref: A) Ottawa 1780
B) Ottawa 0940

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[11.](#) (SBU) Summary: The National Security and Defence Committee of the Senate of Canada suggests that a Canadian Border Patrol might be necessary. The committee also supports arming all Customs Officers at ports of entry. The backing of this Senate committee provides a high visibility boost to the effort of the Customs Officers' Union to enhance their law enforcement role. This committee has a reputation with the GoC of sometimes being a Cassandra, however, so whether this will translate into anything more than a few favorable newspaper headlines is debatable. On the other hand, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), a powerful and influential lobby group, has unanimously endorsed the Border Patrol idea; the support of this group may be an indicator that the political tide is shifting toward greater resources for border law enforcement. End summary.

[12.](#) (U) The Senate Committee on National Security and Defence suggests in its report "'Borderline Insecure" released on June 15, that, among other things, a Canadian Border Patrol might be necessary. The report contains 26 recommendations that address a broad array of issues, including: the need for more urgency on both sides of the border in providing new border crossing infrastructure; a recommendation that the government move away from its current priority of collecting duties and revenues at border crossings and shift the emphasis to security; and that inspectors at ports of entry should carry side-arms. The Senate report is available at: www.senate-senat.ca/border.asp.

[13.](#) (U) The enhanced law enforcement role that the Customs and Excise Union Douanes Accise (CEUDA, which represents 5000 frontline and analyst Customs Officers) is seeking is supported by the committee recommendation that the government move away from its current priority of collecting duties and revenues at border crossings and shift the emphasis to security. The report contends that forcing border officers to collect relatively minor revenues severely weakens their capacity to prevent unwanted persons or contraband from entering Canada. The committee's recommendation to increase personal exemptions for travelers (to C\$2000 for more a visit of more than 24 hours) would help remove this distraction from security.

[14.](#) (U) The CEUDA effort is also supported by the fact that the committee also "reluctantly came to the conclusion" that inspectors at ports of entry should carry side-arms due to the lack of permanent police presence. The committee noted that testimony at committee hearings in recent months has revealed that police protective backup at ports of entry, which in some cases is supposed to be supplied by the RCMP and in others by local police forces, has often been slow or non-existent (Refs A and B).

[15.](#) (U) Finally, the committee noted the encouraging work being done by the multi-agency, bi-national Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs) in 15 regions along the Canada-U.S. land border. However, the committee noted that the government has yet to disclose any systematic measurements that demonstrate that IBETs have succeeded in reducing border threats, and the committee is not yet convinced that IBETs, in themselves, provide enough security between crossings. As a consequence, they have posed the question of whether there is a need for a border patrol in addition to the IBETS, and, if so, who should undertake it? Although not an explicit recommendation to form a Canadian Border Patrol, the committee clearly expects to delve into this specific question more thoroughly in the future.

16. (SBU) Comment: The backing of this Senate committee provides a high profile boost to the visibility of the Customs Officers' Union effort to bolster its law enforcement role; meanwhile, the government insists that the RCMP effort along the border is sufficient and a greater law enforcement role for Customs Officers is not necessary (Refs A and B). Whether the committee support will translate into anything more than a few favorable newspaper headlines is debatable. The committee is well-known for supporting a much more vigorous Canadian defense and law enforcement stance for Canada, and its frequent reports have sometimes resulted in significant changes to GoC policy. For example, the committee's work in 2002 helped lay the groundwork for Canada's 2004 National Security Strategy, the first-ever statement of national security policy. Sometimes, however, the reports are seen by policy-makers as offering Cassandra-like "doom is upon us" warnings that have made a media splash for a day or two and then are ignored by the government. End Comment.

17. (SBU) More significant perhaps than the support for the CEUDA position found in the Senate committee's report is the fact that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (the FCM is akin to the United States' Conference of Mayors) fully supports creation of a Canadian Border Patrol. The FCM unanimously adopted a motion in April 2005 asking the government to "give to the Canadian Border Services Agency the first-response mandate to patrol the border between points of entry." The RCMP and other police forces "would act as the second-response partner along the border at and between points of entry; first-response mandate must be delivered by way of a border patrol."

18. (SBU) Comment: The FCM is a well-established, well-connected, and well-regarded lobby group that has racked up some impressive recent wins; in the federal budget in February 2005 it secured a commitment by the GoC to provide C\$5 billion in fuel-tax revenue directly to cities over the next five years. The support of this group may be an indicator that the political tide, at the all-important local level, is shifting to support greater resources for border law enforcement. End comment.

Roddy